

MARXIST

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Editor's Note

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has decided to observe the year beginning October 17, 2019, as the centenary year of the foundation of the Communist Party of India. This year-long campaign will culminate on October 17, 2020, the day on which the Communist Party of India was founded in Tashkent by a group of revolutionary emigres in 1920.

The century, since the formation of the Communist Party of India, constitutes a glorious chapter in the history of modern India—a history of fierce struggles, immense sacrifices of countless revolutionaries during the freedom struggle and, subsequently, significant contributions in bringing people's issues on the national agenda. From its very inception, the Communists provided a scientific materialist analysis of contemporary, evolving developments and forwarding solutions needed to improve both people's livelihood and political structures in independent India. This was based on the vision of a secular democratic Republic, which eventually moves in the direction of converting our political independence into the economic emancipation of all our people, possible only under socialism.

It shall be the endeavour of the *Marxist* to recollect some of the rich details of Communists' contributions both to the struggle for independence and, subsequently, to advance the class struggles for the emancipation of our people.

In this context, G. Ramakrishnan writes on the peasant movement and Dalit rights in the undivided Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. A distinctive feature of the pre-Independence

movement is that it brought together the anti-colonial, anti-landlord and the social liberation demands of the oppressed people into a single movement. Through the freedom struggle, the Communists' endeavour was to draw the exploited masses of rural India into the freedom movement. On the other hand, the Congress, then leading the struggle, was negotiating with the exploiters in rural India to be eventual collaborators as ruling class partners led by the big bourgeoisie, post-independence. The militant struggles of the peasantry and the rural oppressed ensured that these exploited sections joined the mainstream movement for liberation. This was a distinct contribution of the Communist Party with various militant—at times, armed—struggles, as in Telangana, across the country. In Thanjavur, like elsewhere in the country, the bulk of agricultural labour and tenants belong to the socially caste oppressed sections. In this particular case, it was mainly the Dalits.

The highlight of these struggles was the *Kizhvenmani* massacre. Given the collaboration between the bourgeoisie and the landlords after Independence, oppression and exploitation in rural India continued in many parts. The Communist Party had organized the Dalits on the demands for better wages, better crop share, etc., and a union was formed. The private armies of the landlords attacked these Dalit agricultural workers and poor peasants and burnt alive 44 people of the village Venmani on December 25, 1968. Since then, this has been a 'martyrs' day' pledging to strengthen the resolve to eradicate untouchability and end feudal exploitation.

This struggle achieved some of the longstanding demands and various measures were legally taken in order to ensure fair wages and end social oppression. But the struggles continued as both economic exploitation and social oppression continued to be an obnoxious combination in various parts of India.

A fierce struggle between the right-wing forces and the Left continues to rage on the continent of Latin America. What was described by international media as the 'pink tide' that swept Latin

America in the last decade and a half appears currently to have temporarily retreated. However, there are signs of resurgence all over the region. In the late 1990s and the early 21st century, the Left picked up momentum after the electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 1997. Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia and some other Latin American countries and the Caribbean saw the victory of Left forces in their elections. During the first century of the new millennia, more than 350 million people in the region were living under some sort of Left government.

However, by 2012, this left-wing resurgence started declining under the twin attacks of the political right in these countries financed and supported by the USA and by US actions against these countries.

Donald Trump has re-imposed the economic blockade of Cuba and continues to threaten socialist Cuba in various ways.

Under Trump's Presidency, USA has announced the revival of the notorious 'Monroe Doctrine'. This laid down the policy of the United States way back in 1820s that the countries south of the USA, that is of Latin America, are US imperialism's backyard. In his address to the UN General Assembly in 2018, Donald Trump said that the 'Monroe Doctrine' has been America's 'formal policy' and it 'is alive and well'.

John Cherian discusses these developments which reflect the fierce ongoing struggles between the political Left and the political Right in Latin America.

The document we are reproducing in this volume is the Communique of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Portugal (PCP) which analysed the results of the elections for the Assembly of the Republic and local assemblies in some regions.

The right-wing forces in Portugal, once again, failed to come close to a majority, thereby opening the possibilities of coalition governments. While the right-wing forces are busy trying to ensure a coalition with their majority, the Left, led by the Communist Party with the Left alliance of CDU, is making efforts to thwart

the emergence of a right-wing government. The parliamentary representation after these elections is similar to the framework of correlation of forces that emerged after the 2015 elections. The PCP had supported a coalition to stop the right from assuming the reins of government in 2015. The party evaluates past experience and concludes that the four decades of the unchanged right-wing government's policy 'have not been travelled in vain'.

It says about the past four years' experience the following:

A period that has also shown, as the PCP has always pointed out, that notwithstanding the importance of responding to the most pressing problems, the solutions and policy that the country needed and needs to overcome its structural deficits and ensure sovereign development is a patriotic and left-wing policy that frees the country from submission to the euro and the impositions of the European Union, valorizes labour and workers, promotes national production, ensures public control of the banks and of the basic and strategic sectors of the economy, promotes an administration and public services to serve the people and the country.

This analysis would be of interest to many of us in India in our present political conjuncture.